

Question on Notice
No. 766
Asked on 11 May 2006

MISS SIMPSON asked the Minister for Small Business, Information Technology Policy and Multicultural Affairs (MR CUMMINS) —

QUESTION:

- (1) What is the total funding that the State Government has contributed over the past four years (reported separately) to assist with mobile telephone coverage on highways?
- (2) What is the total amount of funding that the State Government has contributed in each year over the past four years (reported separately) to assist with mobile telephone coverage in Queensland towns?
- (3) Will he provide a list of those Queensland towns that have received access to mobile phone coverage due to State Government assistance and was there any additional support received from the Federal Government or any other body?

ANSWER:

I am particularly pleased that the Member for Maroochydore has raised the issue of telecommunications with me.

Although Telecommunications, and specifically the provision of Broadband Services, are a Federal Government responsibility, since 1998 the Queensland Government has established a number of telecommunications opportunities and aggregated demand arrangements to improve competition and the availability of telecommunications services across Queensland and has undertaken a number of initiatives to leverage its spending on telecommunications services.

These arrangements have aimed to use aggregated Queensland Government expenditure as leverage to promote the development and deployment of cost-effective mobile telecommunications services across Queensland for the benefit of government, business and communities. Outcomes include:

- Nine new CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) base stations in selected locations in rural and remote Queensland.
- Expansion of the CDMA network to Rathdowney, Thargomindah, Dajarra, Flora Downs, Paroo Creek, Mary Kathleen and Nonda in western Queensland, Wujal Wujal near Cooktown and St Pauls on Moa Island in Torres Strait.
- 40 additional GSM (Global System for Mobile) base stations in regional and rural Queensland.

- Relocation of 10 sites for western Queensland that resulted in almost continuous coverage on the Flinders Highway, and improved coverage west on the Barkly Highway. Highway coverage was also significantly improved along the Capricorn, Landsborough, Gregory and Leichhardt Highways and the Gregory Development Road. Nine strategic locations received CDMA coverage for the first time, resulting in almost 17,000 square kilometres of additional digital Code Division Multiple Access mobile phone coverage.
- Deployment of 46 Global Systems for Mobile – mobile telephone base stations, which have improved coverage on the Flinders Highway from Townsville to Charters Towers; Peak Downs Highway from Mackay to Clermont; Gregory Highway from Clermont to Springsure; Capricorn Highway from Rockhampton to Emerald; Dawson Highway from Gladstone to Theodore; Burnett Highway from Biloela to Gayndah; Burnett Highway between Gladstone and Maryborough and north of Mossman; and the Warrego Highway from Dalby to Miles.
- Reef Network – 1,820km of fibre optic cable between Brisbane and Cairns. This reduced broadband charges on the Eastern Seaboard by up to 70%.
- The SmartNet project uses aggregated telecommunications expenditure as leverage to develop and deploy cost effective broadband telecommunications through Queensland. SmartNet initiatives result in equitable supply of telecommunications broadband carriage services throughout Queensland and introduce competition in the provision of telecommunications data carriage services in rural areas. For instance, under SmartNet, broadband infrastructure has been installed into 30 regional towns and fibre optic cable infrastructure into the business districts of Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton.
- Under SmartNet, Queensland businesses will have access to cheaper business grade broadband services. The State Broadband Aggregation Broker Program is currently being run in the following regions: Gold Coast; Darling Downs (including Toowoomba); Gladstone/Rockhampton; Wide Bay Burnett; Sunshine Coast; Mackay/Whitsunday; Emerald, Mt Isa and Longreach.

Realising the Nationals are supporting the full sale of Telstra they have inexcusably sold out the bush.

Clearly the member is indicating her desire to join with me to stand up to the Federal Government and oppose the sale of Telstra.

Our genuine fear is that rural and remote services will continue to decline as a result of the Nationals supporting the full sale of Telstra.

It is a very serious business and I can only hope that this enquiry by the Member is in order for her to raise this issue with her Federal cousins before it is too late.